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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the integration of faith with learning in teacher education, sending surveys to teacher education programs at institutions affiliated with the churches of Christ. The instrument consisted of two parts. Part 1 examined individual faculty members' perceptions of the integration of faith and learning. Part 2 examined teacher education programs as a whole. Approximately 70 part 1 instruments and 14 part 2 instruments were returned, representing participation by all institutions affiliated with the churches of Christ. Results indicated that most respondents believed faith should play a major role in teacher education at religiously affiliated programs. About three-quarters of the respondents believed it was easy to integrate faith with learning in teacher education. The only question with which participants disagreed was the question about whether integration of faith should be confined to certain aspects of teacher education programs. Many faculty members felt a strong sense of responsibility to express their faith in teacher education and that the development of a strong religious faith is an asset to prospective teachers. They did not feel as strongly about integrating specific religious doctrine as they did about integrating values and positive principles of faith. Few programs reported having a formal process for ensuring that faith was integrated into teacher education. The paper proposes a model for the integration of faith and learning in teacher education (Contains 11 references.) (SM)

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INTEGRATING FAITH AND LEARNING IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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Presented at the 1999 Extended Annual Meeting of The Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education

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Integrating Faith and Learning in Teacher Education

Introduction

What makes teacher education at faith-based institutions different? Or, for that matter, is it different, or should it be? These are some of the questions that precipitated the present inquiry. For the purposes of this particular study terms such as "faith-based" and "religious-affiliated" were used to refer to institutions that are affiliated with the Christian faith or religion. We were interested in how the religious principles and beliefs on which these institutions are based influences the teacher education program, or if indeed such principles and beliefs influences teacher education in these institutions at all. We were also interested in the perspectives of individual faculty members regarding their Christian faith and if and how they attempted to integrate that faith into their teaching.

Historically, in this country, faith-based colleges and universities came into existence for a specific purpose. A large part of that purpose was to propagate the Christian values and principles on which the institution was based, to instill those values and principles in its graduates. Over the centuries and the decades the power of that original purpose has ebbed and waned in some institutions. For some, it has been overshadowed by other concerns and priorities. Infusing the institution's original principles and beliefs of faith into its programs is no longer a major force that drives the institution's mission and programs.

At the other end of the continuum, Christian beliefs and principles are still a major influence on the mission and programs of many institutions. Indeed, for some these beliefs and principles form the very bedrock on which the institution is built and permeates virtually its every action. Their Christian faith is the basis for their existence. In general, most individual faculty members at these institutions share that same perspective. And, yet, for many faith-based institutions the struggle and conflict between religion and the "science" of education is very real (Heie, 1992; Barbour, 1996; Simmons, 1997).

Knight (1998) notes that the greatest need of Christian schools is that they are Christian in the fullest sense of the word. He stated,

"In an era of soaring educational costs, the continued existence of Christian schools as an alternative to public systems of education may be predicated upon the ability of Christian educators to develop a genuinely Christian alternative. This need can only be realized as Christian educators clearly understand their basic beliefs and how those beliefs can and must affect their educational

planning and practice. Christian educators will be aided in their task by the study of the ideas of historical and contemporary educational philosophers and theorists, but beyond this they must seek to develop a positive educational philosophy built upon a distinctly Christian world view." (p.xiii)

There has been a fairly common perception that religion and education should be kept strictly separate. Yet, others argue that a healthy dose of religious values is exactly what our schools need today. In its report *Religion in the Curriculum*, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (1988) stated, "Clearly, decisive action is needed to end the current curricular silence on religion." (p. 35) Nord and Haynes (1998) suggested that every teacher education institution offer an elective course for prospective teachers on religion and education, and that perhaps the course be taught jointly by faculty from the religion and education departments.

But, how and to what extent religious faith is integrated into education differs widely and those difference are as varied as the hues of a rainbow. There does appear to be a general consensus among many authors, and among our respondents, as well, that integrating religious faith in teacher education does not mean indoctrinating students with a specific religious dogma and doctrine. Rather, the emphasis appears to be on "general" principles of religious faith, or those positive aspects and values that most would agree benefit society as a whole. This includes values such as compassion, integrity, responsibility, high morals, respect for others. For many, faith-based programs are uniquely qualified to do this. Fraser and Coupolo (1992) stated, "We believe that the Christian world view provides motivations and resources that lead to energetic and careful work in sociological arenas." (p. xi)

Van Brammelen (1998) promotes the idea of "responsive discipleship" among teachers. According to Van Brammelen this has three characteristics.

(1) Teachers help students to use their God-given talents to develop their unique potential.

(2) Teachers help students learn to share each others' joys and burdens, developing their individuality in order to offer their unique gifts to their neighbors and to society.

(3) And teachers promote "shalom," the biblical peace and justice that heals brokenness and restores relationships.

In these ways, says Van Brammelen, students learn to respond to God's call in obedient and responsible ways.

Wilkinson (1992) made the point that,

"When we stand before the Lord in Judgment, do you think he will give us a true-false test or

multiple-choice exam? Will he ask us to name the twelve apostles or list the books of the Bible in order. Of course not! Then why are so many of our classes focused on things that will not be on the final exam?"

Reflecting on this, Higginbotham (1998) went on to observe that we should be equipping teachers for ministry. And it is this aspect of teaching as a ministry, promoting faith-based principles and values, rather than specific doctrine, that is very prevalent in the perspective of many Christian teacher educators. Knight (1998) noted, "Since the function of Christian education is one of reconciliation and restoring the balanced image of God in students, education should be seen primarily as a redemptive act. If education is viewed in that manner, then the role of the teacher is ministerial and pastoral in the sense that the teacher is an agent of reconciliation." (p. 198)

Description of Study

This current investigation originated at Abilene Christian University during 1997. That year the university focused on the theme of integrating faith with learning in its various programs. Readings, symposia, and various discussion groups examined this issue from different perspectives and disciplines. The faculty of the teacher education program began discussing the way they prepared teachers in light of this focus and decided to make it the theme for a conference to be hosted on campus in November, 1998.

This conference involved teacher education faculty from universities affiliated with the churches of Christ. Speakers from each university were invited to present papers regarding how they were integrating faith and learning in some aspect of their teacher education program. Approximately five papers were presented at this conference and it stimulated extensive discussion regarding this issue. Three faculty members from three different institutions represented decided to take the discussion a step further by collaborating in the collection and analysis of additional information on the integration of faith and learning in teacher education

Because this investigation was designed to be an exploratory study, it was decided to focus only on those teacher education programs at institutions affiliated with the churches of Christ. An instrument was developed and piloted with a small group of faculty. Revisions were then made and the instrument mailed. Use was also made of e-mail and faxes. As a result a fairly high number of instruments were returned.

The instrument consisted of two parts. Part I was directed at individual faculty members'

perception regarding the integration of faith and learning, and Part II focused on the teacher education program as a whole. Approximately 70 Part I instruments were returned and 14 Part II instruments. This represented participation of all of the institutions affiliated with the churches of Christ.

Results

On Part I teacher education faculty were asked to respond to five questions designed on a Likert-type scale. These questions and participants' responses can be seen in Table I.

Participants' were fairly consistent in their responses. Most respondents believe that faith should play a major role in teacher education at religiously-affiliated programs. Sixty-four strongly agreed with this and 91% either agreed or strongly agreed. This was closely paralleled by the responses on question 2 regarding the difference between teacher education programs that are integrated with faith and those that are not. Approximately 94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, although fewer agreed strongly with this question than with the previous question.

There was more ambivalence to the third question concerning how easy it is to integrate faith with learning in teacher education. Seventy-five percent either agreed or strongly agreed that it is an easy thing to do.

The only question with which participants disagreed or strongly disagreed was question 5 regarding whether the integration of faith should be confined to only certain aspects of the teacher education program. Eighty-one percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. This is consistent with respondents' comments that it is difficult if not impossible to compartmentalize one's religious faith and that it must permeate through virtually every aspect of a person's life, including his/her professional life as a teacher educator.

Perhaps greater insight into this issue can be gained by examining faculty members' responses to the open-ended item on Part I. This item asked respondents to describe their personal philosophy regarding the importance of integrating faith and learning in teacher education. These responses are summarized in Table Two. Similar responses have been combined and paraphrased.

As can be seen in Table Two many faculty members feel a strong sense of responsibility to express their faith in their preparation of teachers and feel strongly that the development of a strong religious faith is an asset to the prospective teacher. Comments indicate that the teacher educators surveyed in this study believe that teacher preparation with a strong Christian focus better prepares

the prospective teacher for their chosen profession.

It appears evident that teacher education faculty do not feel as strongly about integrating specific religious doctrine into their teaching, but rather the values and positive principles of their faith. A strong theme of teaching as a ministry and the responsibility of teachers to impart religious values to teachers runs prominently in the responses. Faculty tend to believe that strong religious values equip prospective teachers in dealing with many of the problems they will encounter in their teaching career, viewing their Christian faith as providing a source of strength and moral guidance. There is also a tendency to view the Christian faith as providing a framework for relating compassionately and positively with students.

In contrast to Part I of the instrument, Part II revealed a little less of a definitive direction and focus regarding the integration of faith and learning in teacher education. Table Three displays the questions asked of programs and the responses of the programs' representatives. While individual faculty members strongly believe in the value of integrating faith into the teacher education program, and most programs say it is being done across the curriculum (Question 2, Table Three) · few programs report having a formal process for insuring this is done, or a consistent way that it is being done. It is does not appear to be an issue that, in general, is addressed in a structured, purposeful way by the program as a whole, but is usually left up to the prerogative of individual faculty members to address as they see fit.

Discussion

Building on participants' responses to this study's instrument, as well as on the literature addressing this issue, we would like to propose a model for the integration of faith and learning in teacher education. This model, which can be seen in Figure One, is built on a strong mission statement regarding the value and importance of the principles of religious faith in the teacher education program. It is essential that faculty members come together and reach consensus on their mission as a faith-based program. It is this commonly agreed upon mission that must drive the teacher education program.

A second, over-arching, component of this model is the core characteristics of faculty and students. Since most faculty members agree that the integration of faith in their teaching is simply an expression and extension of their personal beliefs and values, it would seem important to determine if those beliefs and values are inherent in the characteristics of faculty members, and that efforts are made to impart those characteristics to students as well.

Reflection in Syllabi

Since syllabi supposedly demonstrate what the content and expectations are for individual courses, it would seem important to determine if specific syllabi reflect the program's emphasis on the integration of faith and learning. Course activities, classroom discussions, and expectations of students would then flow naturally from the faith-based emphasis of the syllabus. Several respondents suggested ways this might be done. In a course such as Educational Psychology, for instance, one respondent observed that developmental theory could address how we develop toward God's design and plan, and moral development could address many of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Another respondent stated that in his class on education law, he stresses that students should honor their contracts, incorporating the teachings of Psalms 15:4, "Who will dwell with God? He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not."

Reflection in Discussions

Many respondents expressed ways in which the Christian faith could be expressed in classroom discussions. One respondent related that in his/her class on leadership, an emphasis is placed on servant leadership as discussed in Mark 10 and John 13.

Hood and Simpson (1998) encourage the use of "integrative questions" in class dicusssions as described by Heie. According to Hood and Simpson the "true integrative question challenges the student to struggle with issues of faith and learning simultaneously. The integrative question cannot be adequately addressed without drawing on both the spiritual world and the world of course content" (p.2)

For instance, prospective teachers could be asked to discuss the biblical concepts of redemption and forgiveness within the context of the classroom. Other concepts that might be explored are service, judgment, love, integrity, faithfulness, etc.

Reflection in Activities

In a faith-based classroom various activities would incorporate the value and importance of faith. Many respondents, for example, reported beginning their classes with devotionals and engaging students in prayers for specific purposes. A number of programs also reported culminating activities for their programs that focus on the integration of Christian faith. One respondent described an activity at the end of her early childhood program that consist of a formal ceremony with a religious focus in which she gives each of her students a "blessing" and a promise

to pray for them during their first year of teaching.

Reflection in Policies

Teacher education faculty intent on integrating faith and learning in their programs should not neglect an examination of their policies in light of Christian principles and values. Policies will, hopefully, reflect the emphasis the program has on Christian faith and such concepts as servantship, responsibility, and compassion.

Reflection in Interactions

Finally, our model addresses the issue of faculty-student interactions. Many respondents pointed out the importance of modeling for students their Christian faith and values. This is something that does not happen just in the classroom, but in numerous interactions with students through activities such as counseling, advising, and mentoring. It is often in these interactions where the deepest and most profound impact is made on students as they see that a faculty member's Christian faith is not something they merely claim in the classroom, but something they practice in all aspects of their life.

Conclusion

This study was very limited in its scope, addressing as it did one specific form of religious faith in one particular context, that of programs affiliated with the churches of Christ. Yet, it does emphasize how strongly some teacher educators feel about the importance of integrating their faith with learning and the struggle many have in trying to accomplish that. It remains an issue that will continue to be somewhat controversial, and that is sure to generate additional discussion and debate.

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TABLE ONE

RESPONSES OF TEACHER EDUCATION FACULTY TO ITEMS REGARDING THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING IN TEACHER EDUCATION

	1-Strongly Agree	2 - Agree	3- Neutral	4 Disagree	5- Strongly Disagree	Mean
1. The integration of faith should play a major role in teacher education programs at religiously-affiliated institutions.	45	19	2	2	2	1.5
2. Teacher preparation that is integrated with faith is significantly different from other teacher preparation programs.	35	26	6	1	0	1.6
3. I find it is easy to integrate faith into teacher education programs.	17	36	7	8	2	2
4. The integration of faith into teacher education programs produces more successful teachers.	34	26	5	2	2	1.7
5. The integration of religious faith should be relegated to only certain aspects of the teacher education program.	3	7	4	33	23	4.8

Table Two: Responses of Teacher Education Faculty Members Regarding Their Philosophy of the Importance of Integrating Faith and Learning in Teacher Education

The more teachers we produce with strong spiritual values, the higher the demand for our teachers.
We must develop in teachers an attitude for "serving" students
Use examples from scripture to address classroom situations
Incorporate character into the teacher education curriculum
Conduct discussions regarding how teachers can demonstrate faith in the classroom
Emphasize the contributions of spiritual and moral leaders
Prayer and devotionals in class
We can't separate our Christianity from our teaching
Religious faith cannot be compartmentalized
Teacher preparation must be a reflective process. Students musts reflect upon their personal faith and examine facts of the education structure.
Our Christian faith has to permeate every aspect of our lives, including our profession.
Teachers must be taught there are many ways they can demonstrate their faith in a school setting
Students in our schools today have tremendous needs. Teaching from a Christian perspective makes a teacher uniquely able to meet many of those needs.
Christianity changes behavior. Our students need to see how it has changed our lives and we need to help them relate ways their faith can be used in school settings.
We must use "teachable moments" to help students see how a Christian faith can increase their effectiveness as a teacher.
A Christian faith can help our students develop direction and focus for their lives.
It would be dishonest of me not to share the source of strength I have with my students.
When students share or express spiritual principles I try to reinforce it.
A Christian faith can help guide and support a teacher in many of the difficulties and trials they may face as teachers.
There has been a decay in morality and values occurring in our schools. Much of this is due, in part, to the elimination of teaching values in schools.
We must give our preservice teachers strategies to teach their students values.
The integration of faith in teacher education is reflected in the ways we communicate with future teachers and the ways issues such as classroom management, self-esteem, etc. are addressed.
The expression of my Christian faith should be as natural at school and in the classroom as it is at home or church.
Integrating faith and learning in teacher education allows our teachers to reach a higher calling able to reach a higher calling in their effort to have an
impact on children.
My faith & knowing that I always have help at my side allows me to have a more positive attitude.
I stress to my students that good teachers aren't made by us, but through the strength and guidance that our faith gives us.
If teacher education programs at religious affiliated institutions do not have a strong and pervasive integration of faith and learning, they have little reason to exist.
A teacher who demonstrates faith is one who will be more successful in the profession.
We must live "seamlessly" and we must teach our students to live seamlessly. This means that we can't separate our Christian faith from other aspects of our lives.
I talk to my students about instances where my faith has assisted my teaching and instances where it has been challenged.
I share my insights on the spiritual implications of various developmental theories
I try to emphasize to students that teaching is a ministry.
To honor knowledge apart from the Source of knowledge is ineffective.
Religious faith should be part of a teacher education program only if graduates are to teach in schools run by their religion. Faith should not be emphasized in programs preparing teacher to work in other schools.
Spirituality cannot be separated from behavior, cognition, and affect. We can show prospective teachers that reason goes only so far in teaching, but faith can carry a teacher when reason fails or falls short.
I try to relate three main themes in all of my classes: Faith, Hope, Love.
We can incorporate religion in our teacher education program, but when our students hit the "real" world it is so completely different that it is difficult for them.
I haven't specifically integrated faith in instruction in my classes. I'm interested in how to do it.
I try to tie faith in with my topics whenever possible.

TABLE 3
RESPONSES OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO PART II

	Yes	No	Comments
1. Do you have a class or classes in your teacher education program which specifically focus on the integration of faith in the education profession	1	12	Bible competency through religion classes only
2. Do you integrate faith across all courses in you teacher education program?	9	4	Mission statement at the university and program level: Emphasize ethics, not necessarily religious faith: Try, but not consistent: Left up to individual faculty:
3. Do class syllabi specifically reflect the integration of faith in teacher education classes?	4	9	Some: Mandated in each course: Indirectly by using concepts such as attitudes, values, relationships:
4. Do you have a formal mechanism or process for insuring that faith is integrated into your teacher education program?	2	11	Could be dangerous: Cooperatively, consensus: University, Not Teacher Education
5. Do you have a process in place for evaluating the impact of faith-based teacher education preparation for your graduates?	1	12	Yes, graduate follow-up: In progress:

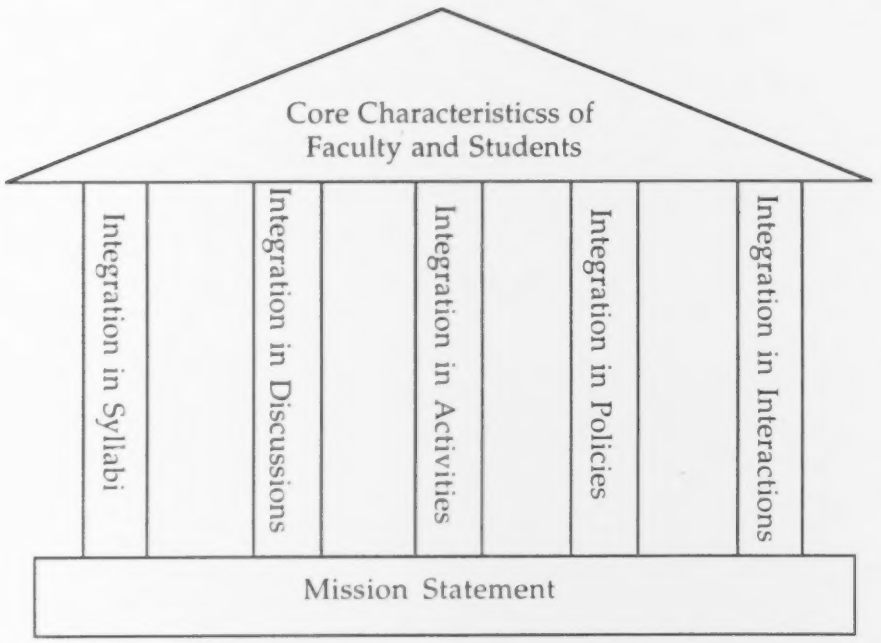

Figure One: A Model for the Integration of Faith and Learning in Teacher Education